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Earlier this year I began noticing a variety of different media content being distributed by former hosts and workers of TechTV. I was happy to know that Leo Laporte, Patrick Norton and Kevin Rose had not abandoned their ambition to bring quality and informative computer and technology related media to individuals like me. Leo Laporte began TWiT, this WEEK in TECH, as an effort to revive the golden days of quality tech based content once available on a cable television show named The Screen Savers on TechTV (Laporte). It was through TWiT that I was introduced to the different types of media available from former TechTV workers like Kevin Rose, Alex Albrecht, Dan Huard, Keith Harrison, Patrick Norton, Joshua "Yoshi" DeHerrera, Martin Sargeant as well as other projects Leo Laporte was starting. The amount of content these people were producing astonished me.

Kevin Rose founded the web-based tech network, Revision3 (REV3), as well as digg.com, a technology news website (Digg). TWiT and DiggNation, another one of Kevin Rose's projects, quickly became favorites among podcast ranking websites and Patrick Norton began hosting DigitalLife TV (DL.TV), an internet based television program dedicated to all things tech (Davis). The work, dedication and success of these individuals inspired me to think about the role and capabilities all individuals are able to hold in our modern age of media communication.

In 1841 Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events”. Though the context of these words may hold differing meaning at the time of their writing than what I present through this paper today, the words themselves communicate clearly a message that we all possess the capabilities to function as individuals in a community fundamentally dependent on each other for continual success.

Today the internet allows communication and interaction between any individuals that can obtain access via a modem, broadband connection, satellite, Wi-Fi or by any other means. This is a concept that has become common knowledge; yet, with this knowledge, there is a lack of understanding of an individual’s capability and incorporation in this network of interactions. Most people think of the Internet as a place to visit a webpage; as a means of instant messaging; or as a way of doing research. While these and other typical ways of usage are in some ways beneficial, they do not represent the true power and potential of the Internet. This paper is an attempt to educate the reader in what I call “integrated self-reliance”: An Individuals ability of independent education, entertainment, and distribution that is made possible in our current era of global interconnectivity because of the advent of the Internet.

Much of the material covered in this paper is an overview of relatively new applications and projects developed or inspired from older ideas of individual freedom, choice and community interdependence. To begin I will give a short explanation of the basic idea and implementations of social-networking. Then I will introduce podcasting and vidcasting/IPTV and the ways in which these mediums are being used as both entertainment and educational services. After that I will discuss eBooks and audiobooks and the similar educational services they provide. Following that are ways in which individuals can find media training online, both

paid for and free. Continuing the theme of community driven applications and individual rights to share and control their material, I will present open-source software and Creative Commons licensing. Finally, I will suggest ways that anyone can to store, publish and distribute material using several services.

Social-networking is a term coined by J. A. Barnes to indicate the social relationships between various individuals (1954). Today, in a similar respect, social-networking refers to a community of individuals and their ranging similarities. This type of social-networking, though, is an online community that grows as members of a site send out invitations to other individuals or as individuals simply join the community by signing up for a personal account. These sites usually offer features such as viewable user profiles with pictures, blogs, and the ability to add friends to your profile. Examples that offer these types of services are Friendster (Lindstorm) and Myspace.

Other examples of social-networking sites include Facebook (Zuckerberg), Flickr, and del.icio.us. Both del.icio.us and Flickr provide solutions for storing information on the internet and the ability to access it from any computer connected to the internet. Flickr advertises itself as “The best way to store, search, sort and share yours photos.” Del.icio.us describes its service as a way to “**Keep** links to your favorite articles, blogs, music, restaurant reviews, and more.” Facebook, which is now opening its doors to high school students, is a social-networking site for college and university students that currently has approximately 22,000 individual members.

Through these websites individuals are able to find users with similar interests, hobbies, or aspirations. Their relationships are dependant on these commonalities and so users will sometimes flock to certain websites, products or interests that their friends have posted. Because of these interactions some companies are seeking to acquire or use similar social-networking

technologies. Businesses view social-networking as a means of attracting a large number of individuals to their services. An example of this is Yahoo! which recently acquired both Del.icio.us and Flickr.

Another type of social community worth mentioning is Digg. According to digg's FAQ:

Digg is a technology news website that combines social bookmarking, blogging, RSS, and non-hierarchical editorial control. With digg, users submit stories for review, but rather than allow an editor to decide which stories go on the homepage, the users do. (Digg)

Kevin Rose, founder of Digg, described it as initially "nothing more than a little fun project. [. . .] Initially, it was all self-funded out of my pocket" (Einfeldt). Further into the development of digg Jay Adelson, Kevin Rose's long time friend, jumped on as CEO of Digg. While being a site dedicated to the latest in tech-news, Digg utilizes similar functionalities other social-networking sites offer including personal profiles, blog postings, and the typical add a friend feature. BusinessWeek Online recommends digg as a way of keeping up with the "fast-multiplying amount of content on the Web" (Web Smart 50). Although it is a technology news website there is a variety of other categories to browse through. Some of my favorites include gaming, science, and technology.

A year ago most people would have looked at me funny if I were to mention the word podcast. Although this has not changed much, the New Oxford American Dictionary has selected "podcast" as the Word of the Year for 2005 (Prnewswire). It defines the term as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player." This definition may be a bit misleading. A podcast does not require any type of personal audio player. Anyone is able to listen to the audio via a

computer. There are a variety of different ways to obtain a podcast. Either by manually download a podcast through a direct download link on the podcast's website, by subscribing through a podcast client/aggregator such as iPodder (Curry) or Doppler (Hunen), through websites like Odeo (Williams) or PodNova, or through BitTorrent. A much easier way to get podcasts, and probably the way most of the newer listeners get their podcasts, is through iTunes.

There are thousands of podcasts available ranging from technology, science and politics to comedy, drinking, and knitting. If there is a subject that's of your interest, as weird or common as it may be, chances are such a podcast exists (You just have to know where to look). My list includes this Week in Tech, DiggNation, Infected, Switcheon (Castles), Go Magic Go (Barber), Bedtime Stories My Kids Love (Mbl) and a few podcasts from Pbs.org such as the NOVA podcast.

Podcasts do not just function as entertainment, they can also be used as educational tools. LearnOutLoud.com, along with providing its own podcast, offers "over 9,000 educational audio books, MP3 downloads, [and] podcasts" (Bischke). LearnOutLoud follows a simple mission: "We want to promote the use of audio and video educational material for personal and professional development" ([About Us](#)). Some of their content requires purchase but they also offer a directory of free educational content ([FREE AUDIO & VIDEO](#)). A real leader in free and open educational resource is MIT's OpenCourseWare (MIT OCW) (Office Of Provost), "an open educational resource publishing MIT Course Materials". MIT OCW's goals are to "Provide free, searchable, access to MIT's course materials for educators, students, and self-learners around the world" and to "Extend the reach and impact of MIT OCW and the 'opencourseware' concept" ([MIT OCW About](#)). They offer podcasts (audio lectures) for several of their courses as well as assignments, readings, projects and other educational material. Their

courses are also available in Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese. The best part is that access to all the material does not require any kind of registration, membership, and you do not even have to be a student.

Other institutions have also begun offering publication of their materials in “opencourseware” initiatives. These institutions include Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Tufts University, and Utah State University in the United States. Japanese Universities include Keio University, Kyoto University, and Tokyo Institute of Technology as well as several others. China has over 150 different OCW projects currently devoted to the public and Vietnam offers the Fulbright Economics Teaching Program. The material provided by these institutions through the use of podcasts is an example of how a simple technology can be used to distribute free educational services to the public.

Expanding beyond podcasting, or rather building from audio services, are mediums such as Vidcasting and Internet Protocol Television (IPTV). Vidcasting is another way of enjoying some of your favorite podcast. For example diggnation offers both audio and video versions of its show. This Week in Tech every now and then also offers a video version of its podcast.

IPTV can simply be described as watching television over a broadband connection. Currently IPTV appeals to the few knowledgeable enough to understand how to obtain content, although iTunes does offer the ability to subscribe to several vidcasts. Shows can be viewed either by streaming the video or by downloading them off of their website. A great source for IPTV shows is IPTVshows.org (Timmer). It is the site I use to explore the quality content that IPTV currently has to offer. Another problem with IPTV is that there is currently not an easy way of getting the content on to a television where it would be most reasonable to watch your

favorite shows. IPTV is typically viewed through a computer monitor unless one is skilled enough to find a convenient way of watching it over a current television set.

It is not farfetched to believe that Internet based shows, or for that matter current television shows that could legally be downloaded through the Internet, would begin to grow and become more popular and mainstream. Devices that allow video playback such as Apple's current generation iPod and Sony's PSP provide viable platforms for IPTV content (That is until the emergence of a suitable way of distributing these shows into the living room). My preferences are shows such as Diggnation, Thebroken, System, DL.TV, From The Shadows, and various Pbs.org video content like NerdTV.

Like podcasting, distribution of video content over the Internet is not limited to providing entertainment. The OpenCourseWare Projects I previously mentioned offer free video of their lectures and LearnOutLoud.com also offers video content in its free directory. PBS has a weekly online TV show called NerdTV which it describes as "essentially *Charlie Rose* for geeks - a one-hour interview show with a single guest from the world of technology". It also offers its NATURE: Video Database available to watch online as well as programs like The Elegant Universe, in its 3 hours entirety, Nova ScienceNOW episodes, MARS Dead or Alive, Life's Greatest Miracle, and Cracking the Code of Life ([WATCH NOVAS](#)). These applications again demonstrate ways in which new technologies can be used to provide educational as well as entertaining material to anyone seeking to find such services.

EBooks and audiobooks are yet other mediums that offer ways of independent learning. An eBook is an electronic or digital format of a book. They can be viewed either on an eBook reading device such as a PDA or on your computer. There are a variety of different formats when it comes to eBooks. Some of the more popular include Adobe's .pdf format,

Microsoft's .lit format, and Palm's .pdb. format. Other formats are also available for different devices and for software that allow viewing on a computer.

An audiobook is a recording of the contents in a book. Audiobooks are not a new medium. Books on tape have been around for about two decades. What is new is the digital format audiobooks have adopted. Audiobooks can be obtained as a CD or as a digital audio file such as an mp3 or ogg.

Both eBooks and audiobooks usually require purchase. Ebooks can be purchased at websites such as eBooks.com (Cole) and audiobooks at such places as Audible.com where they have an Audible Education section that offers special discounts to students and educators. Of course there are several projects that offer similar services but ask for no money. These projects follow similar philosophies, missions and objectives. Project Gutenberg which began in 1971, offers free eBooks as well as audiobooks to download (Hart). It follows a philosophy I deeply admire: "The Project Gutenberg Philosophy is to make information, books and other materials available to the general public in forms a vast majority of the computers, programs and people can easily read, use, quote, and search" ([Project Gutenberg Philosophy](#)). The University of Virginia Library's EText Center provides "over 2,100 publicly-available e-books including classic British and American fiction, major authors, children's literature, the Bible, Shakespeare, American history, African-American documents, and much more" as well as a collection of other publicly accessible titles ([Etext Center Free](#)). Its mission is "to create an on-line archive of standards-based texts and images in the humanities" and "to build and support user communities adept at the creation and use of online resources" ([Mission](#)). LibriVox provides access to "totally free audiobooks" and has an objective to "make all books in the public domain available, for free, in audio format on the internet" (McGuire). The use of eBooks and audiobooks are

another service provided by a community that aspires to supply individuals with the material needed to fulfill their rooted inclination to learn.

Online training is a growing endeavor. Alex Lindsay was always looking for a better and inexpensive way to train in a “nutrient-rich environment” where he would have an opportunity to “have contact with real professionals” (Lindsay, Introduction). Five years ago he created the Pixel Corps (Lindsay), “a global production community capable of generating content around the world” which offers online application training that ranges from Adobe’s Photoshop and Maxon’s Cinema 4D to REALVIZ’s Image Modeler and ZaxWerk’s Pro Animator (2005). He, like so many others, follows a praiseworthy philosophy: “I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to enter and succeed in this industry. I believe this opportunity should be based on commitment and determination, not money or location, and I intend to make the opportunity a reality” (Introduction). Committed to the philosophy, Alex Lindsay and the Pixel Corps set up Media Centers in Zimbabwe, “Our goal is to use the internet and media arts to help artists in places like Zimbabwe sell their sculptures directly to consumers and to increase the visibility of the arts in Africa to increase the value of their work” (Lindsay, Media Production). The Pixel Corps currently has over 1500 members in more than 20 countries.

The Pixel Corps is a great way of learning a variety of different media programs and training along side with professionals. Although seeking to provide a service that is not heavily dependent on money, the Pixel Corps is a business that requires financial support to continue offering the quality work they provide. They do, on the other hand, provide some free tutorials that do not require any payment.

Browsing through the internet it is not difficult to find free tutorials or even whole training programs provided by either businesses as well as students. For example, the BBC

offers free online courses, originally designed for its staff, which includes training in Broadcasting Television and Radio along with training in Journalism and Safety ([Free Online Broadcast Courses](#)). CBT Cafe offers “free web based software training and web based software tutorials for multimedia and graphic design in HTML, QuickTime® Video, and Flash video training formats” (Anderson). Student projects include SeanGreasley.com, created by Sean Greasley who is currently attending Sheffield Hallam University in England, which offers free tutorials for programming languages such as C++, Visual Basic, SQL, and Java (Greasley). CBT4Free.com (Paulus), “dedicated to providing quality educational videos free of charge”, is a computer-based training website that began as a project ([CBT4FREE about](#)). It provides videos explaining how to setup and configure Windows and Linux web servers and networking monitoring programs. Projects and websites such as these are widely available throughout the Internet and provide users an opportunity of independence in learning something they would otherwise have considered too much trouble to pursue.

Innovation, freedom and collaboration are ideas that when combined contribute to the growth of quality products available to everyone. Open modification and distribution of software allows for the expansion of products that are constantly updated and improved by a community and are not dependant on an individual company, but rather each other, of providing the necessary tools and features required as technology moves forward. The open-source movement and the Creative Commons licensing are examples of these ideas put into practice.

Open-source is the idea of an open community where everyone has access to the source code for a piece of software and the ability to modify and redistribute it, thus improving its functionality, adaptability and overall quality. Open-source software must follow a certain criteria which are outlined by the Open Source Definition, promoted by the Open Source

Initiative (OSI) Corporation (Perens). The criterion includes free redistribution, the inclusion of source code, and must allow modifications and distribution under the same license.

Open-source software is sometimes used by businesses and individuals as alternatives to similar but more expensive software. Such examples include OpenOffice (OpenOffice.org), an alternative to Microsoft Office, and Linux (The Linux Home Page), an alternative open-source operating system created by Linus Torvalds. Because open-source software, like Linux, is distributed freely, companies like Amazon, Google, and Yahoo all incorporate Linux servers as part of their infrastructure. Financially, it makes perfect sense to use these less expensive means as a way of running a business (Penenberg).

The open availability of the Linux Kernel, which contains the essential features required to run the operating system, has resulted in a variety of Linux distributions including Red Hat, Fedora, and SUSE (Lance). Linux is an example of an open-source project that is constantly being modified and distributed by a community seeking their own objectives. For example Linux distributions like Ubuntu Linux (Shuttleworth) and Red Hat are aimed toward the average user and aspire to provide a graphical and stable operating system while Slackware would rather provide a secure, stable, and reliable system at the cost of graphical complexity. Both KNOPPIX and Debian are considered GNU/Linux operating systems. They use a combination of the Linux Kernel along with application and system tools from the GNU Project to make up the functionality of the system (The GNU Project). The principal sponsor of the GNU Project is the Free Software Foundation (FSF):

Established in 1985, is dedicated to promoting computer users' rights to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer programs. The FSF promotes the

development and use of free software, particularly the GNU operating system, used widely in its GNU/Linux variant. (Free Software Foundation)

Part of the GNU Project includes one of the most popular open-source licenses, the GNU General Public License which is:

Designed to make sure that you have the freedom to distribute copies of free software (and charge for this service if you wish), that you receive source code or can get it if you want it, that you can change the software or use pieces of it in new free programs; and that you know you can do these things. ([GNU License](#))

Open-source software is not just limited to office tools and operating systems. There are thousands of other open-source software available. Some of the more popular can be found at SynergyMX.com's Free and Open Source Software page ([Freeware and Open Source](#)). Projects such as the Free Software Foundation's Free Software Directory Project and the OSSwin project also catalog lots of other free open-source software. Of course "the world's largest Open Source software development web site", SourceForge.net, "hosts more Open Source development products than any other site or network worldwide" ([What is SourceForge.net](#)).

My favorite open-source project has to be the Mozilla Firefox Project. The goal of this project is, "to deliver the best possible browsing experience to the widest possible set of people" ([Mozilla Development Charter](#)). In the process of writing this paper I carried a portable version of Firefox wherever I went via a USB drive (Haller). I used Firefox as a practical means of sorting and storing all my information using bookmarks and as an effective way of viewing that information using the built-in multiple tab feature. The Firefox browser allows for extensions to be installed which add more features and functions to the basic browser's capabilities. I found an extension named SessionSaver especially useful for those times when a computer I was

currently using spontaneously locked up ([SessionSaver](#)). I could depend on this extension to load the browser to the last “session” it recognized and therefore allow me to continue my work as if nothing disastrous had occurred.

Creative Commons offers copyright licenses. Simple enough. Moreover it “offers flexible copyright licenses for creative works” ([Creative Commons](#)). The Creative Commons license enables individuals to grant certain rights to the public that are not allowed through normal copyright. Some of these rights include “Whether the work will be made available under non-commercial or commercial terms...Whether derivatives will be allowed to be made of the work or not...[and] Whether derivative works must be made available under the same terms that they were first used, or not” (Ford). Unlike the GNU GLP, intended for open-source software, Creative Commons is designed for “other kinds of creative works” including “websites, scholarship, music, film, photography, literature, courseware, etc” ([Creative Commons About](#)). It attempts to:

Use private rights to create public goods: creative works set free for certain uses.

Like the free software and open-source movements, our ends are cooperative and community-minded, but our means are voluntary and libertarian. We work to offer creators a best-of-both-worlds way to protect their works while encouraging certain uses of them — to declare “some rights reserved.”

([Creative Commons About Us](#))

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Once placed in the public domain, the Work may be freely reproduced, distributed, transmitted, used, modified, built upon, or otherwise exploited by anyone for any purpose, commercial or non-commercial, and in any way, including by methods that have not yet been invented or conceived. ([Public Domain](#))

Other licenses to choose from include the Developing Nations license, which “allows you to invite a wide range of royalty-free uses of your work in developing nations” ([Developing Nations](#)), along with the Sampling, Founder’s Copyright, Wiki, or Attribution-ShareAlike 2.5 license and the Creative Commons GNU GPL and GNU LGPL ([Choose a License](#)).

Examples of things under the Creative Commons license are this WEEK in TECH, Revision3, Go Magic Go, NerdTV, CBT4Free, and MIT OpenCourseWare Project along with other OCW projects. The Creative Commons homepage links to a “Find” page which includes a directory of licensed work to browse through. Using Google’s Advanced search page it is now possible to “search results [. . .] limited to content [. . .] under a Creative Commons license” (Garlick). Creative Commons content can also be found at Common Content, a website that offers “An open catalog of Creative Commons licensed content” (Kramer).

Through the Creative Commons website, I was introduced to Ourmedia and the Internet Archive. Ourmedia is an open-source project and website that hosts “video, audio, music, photos, text and public domain works” ([Ourmedia Mission](#)). According to their mission page, “Ourmedia is a global community and learning center where you can gain visibility for your works of personal media. We’ll host your media forever — for free.” It was started “by members of the creative and technology communities in the summer of 2004.”

The Internet Archive, “a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was founded to build an ‘Internet library,’ with the purpose of offering permanent access for researchers, historians, and scholars to historical collections that exist in digital format”, exists as a preserver of “society’s cultural artifacts” ([Internet Archive About](#)). It is undertaking an admirable task, “to prevent the Internet [. . .] and other ‘born-digital’ materials from disappearing into the past” as is believed occurred to tens of thousands of scrolls as a result of several destructive events to the ancient Library of Alexandria. Internet Archive has begun an Open Educational Resource section that includes MIT’s OpenCourseWare Project as well as other educational content.

The Creative Commons website recommended Ourmedia, as well as Internet Archive, as host websites for material under their licenses. To publish work on Ourmedia all you need to do is register on both Ourmedia and the Internet Archive. Ourmedia and Internet Archive are not the only places that provide hosting services. There are many other hosting services available all over the Internet but Ourmedia and Internet Archive provide their generous services for free.

Through Ourmedia I was also introduced to some of their sponsors and partners which include Outhink and Bryght ([Ourmedia Partners](#)). Outhink provides SpinXpress, a free application used for personal webcasting (Toole). This program allows you to share content with “friends, family or associates.” With it one could create their very own vidcast. It also features security to keep content “safe from prying eyes.” Bryght “is a Drupal-hosted content management service that enables anyone — from individuals to businesses and organizations — to easily build and maintain a dynamic website with an online community.” Although Bryght is still in beta, it intend to offer, and currently does offer, services such as domain and email registration, possibly unlimited storage, all the bandwidth one would need, podcasting as well as community features like, profiles, photo galleries, blogs, and RSS aggregation.

Another way of publishing work is through Lulu.com, a Self-Publishing service.

Through Lulu it is possible to “publish and sell a variety of digital content including books, music, video, software, calendars, photos and artwork” ([Lulu Basics FAQ](#)). It offers a variety of different services including pre-publishing, graphics, publishing and marketing. What is great about Lulu is that it does not claim any ownership of an individual’s work, “We give the creators and owners of digital content complete control over how they use their work. [. . .] If you utilize one of Lulu's distribution services, Lulu will appear as the publisher of record. This will allow stores to order your product directly from Lulu.” Individuals are allowed to remove their work from Lulu at anytime. Publishing material through Lulu is completely free.

Understanding how the internet can be utilized leads to innovation and opportunity for individuals at a large scale. Through various services and projects made available across the Internet, individuals are now able to contribute to the individualistic aspirations held by everyone. Yet the success of this ambition depends primarily on the cooperation of individuals that make up the community that creates, distributes and acknowledges all the content that constitutes to our continual and binding philosophy of individual choice and practice – a practiced idea I have chosen to call “integrated self-reliance”.

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